

Discussion on the Practice of Expatriate Employees in Cross Culture of Subsidiaries -- Taking Wal-Mart as an Example

Jiayi Shen *

School of Art and Communication, Nanhang Jincheng College, Nanjing, 211156, China

* Corresponding Author Email: jyshen041129@hhu.edu.cn

Abstract. Wal-Mart has a large number of subsidiaries around the world and is relatively well staffed, but due to various factors, its revenue contribution to overseas business is relatively low. This illustrates Wal-Mart's prospects and obstacles in the international market. The enterprise's foreign workers encounter new demands and obstacles as the degree of internationalization is continuously improved. Dispatched employees are the core of connecting the headquarters and subsidiaries of multinational companies and play an important bridge role. Therefore, the cross-cultural practice discussion of expatriated employees has become a focus of international human resources management at present. This article will explore the cultural differences faced by Wal-Mart in the process of communication between expatriate employees sent by the headquarters to each subsidiary and the host country in 2015-2024 through the retrieval and qualitative analysis of literature, and explore these cross-cultural problems. The study investigate a number of real-world solutions to examine a range of cross-cultural issues that Wal-Mart employees face in the host country.

Keywords: Expatriated employees, cross-cultural communication, Wal-Mart, cultural differences.

1. Introduction

Enterprise expatriate workers encounter increased demands and problems in the context of globalization, as do businesses that deal with workers and clients from other nations and cultural backgrounds. The secret becomes knowing how to manage and communicate successfully. Cross-cultural management seeks to reconcile cultural differences, transform the enterprise's distinct culture, and ultimately attain effective management practices. This entails forging an efficient management process, resolving cultural disputes, developing a distinctive corporate culture, and taking an inclusive management approach to the subsidiary's home nation [1]. Multinational companies inevitably involve cross-cultural communication and exchange, and people from different cultural backgrounds often have completely different understandings when they encounter the same problem. Cross-cultural leadership is also an important phenomenon in multinational enterprises and transnational organisations [2]. Since leadership practices are associated with particular cultural systems, it is critical for leaders to recognize the distinctiveness of cross-cultural leadership within the framework of multicultural cohabitation. Cross-cultural leadership is a rare phenomena that assesses a leader's capacity to navigate and adjust to cultural barriers. It is not just found in global corporations and organizations. Therefore, the enterprise's success depends on its ability to recognize and manage cultural diversity. For international corporations, learning about the cross-cultural working environment and related hot themes is crucial. It has to do with how businesses efficiently handle and interact with staff members and clients from distinct cultural origins in order to increase their competitiveness and market share [3]. With the in-depth development of globalisation, in the process of expanding the international market, expatrate employees often face problems in cross-cultural communication with employees in the host country. These expatriate employees often encounter cultural shocks and adaptation challenges when entering the environment of the subsidiary. The existing research has relevant research about the cultural differences when sending foreign workers to their new country , but there is still no comprehensive and perfect analysis of the level affecting this problem, and there are still insufficient corresponding vacancies [3]. Therefore, this article will continue to study the relevant issues of expatriated employees in the cross-cultural aspects of

subsidiaries. Through the retrieval and analysis of literature, coupled with qualitative analysis, on the basis of the discussion of cross-cultural practice of expatriate employees in 2015-2024, the differences in values between expatriate personnel and employees in the host country, the cultural differences between expatriate employees in the host country, such as cultural beliefs and religious issues, and the expatriate staff in the host country The three perspectives of countermeasures to cross-cultural problems of workers are discussed and analysed on the problems encountered by foreign employees in the cross-cultural aspects of subsidiaries [4].

2. Case Introduction

Wal-Mart was founded by Mr. Sam Walton in 1962 in Arkansas, USA. After more than 60 years of development, Wal-Mart has operated more than 10,500 stores and multiple e-commerce websites in 19 countries across borders. Wal-Mart's global revenue in fiscal year 2024 reached \$648 billion, with a total of about 2.1 million employees worldwide, and has repeatedly topped the Fortune 500 list. With omni-channel retail as the core, Wal-Mart helps customers buy satisfactory goods anytime, anywhere and at will through in-person businesses as well as a variety of online retailers. It is committed to saving money for customers and making their lives better. Wal-Mart continues to play a leading role in sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and employment opportunities. In China, Wal-Mart adheres to the four core values and behaviours of "serving customers, respecting individuals, pursuing excellence, and acting with integrity", focusses on opening every store, serving every customer well, fulfilling the company's core mission, and constantly creating extraordinary things for customers, members and employees [4]. Wal-Mart entered China in 1996 and opened the first Wal-Mart shopping mall and Sam's member store in Shenzhen. At present, it operates a variety of business forms and brands in China, including Wal-Mart hyperstores and Sam's member stores. It has opened hundreds of stores and several distribution centres in more than 100 cities across the country. The current situation of Wal-Mart in cross-cultural organisation and management faces a series of challenges. As an American retail giant, the challenges of Wal-Mart's cross-cultural management are mainly reflected in how to effectively manage and motivate expatriates from different cultural backgrounds, and how to adapt to the political, economic and cultural environment of different countries [5]. Under the background of globalisation, the operating environment and business model of enterprises are influenced by multiculturalism. Different regions and countries have different cultural backgrounds and values, which brings challenges to enterprise management. In addition, Wal-Mart also encountered the challenge of cross-cultural communication when entering the Chinese market. Because there are significant China as well as the USA possess distinct cultures, including differences in strong and weak context culture, individualism and collectivism, and power distance, these cultural differences affect Wal-Mart's performance in the Chinese market. Although Wal-Mart, as the largest retailer in the United States, has not performed well since it entered the Chinese market in 1996, ranking only about 20th in the ranking of the retail sector in China. In a word, combined with the current situation of Wal-Mart in cross-cultural organisation and management, it shows that in the face of the challenges of globalisation and diversification, enterprises need to adopt cross-cultural management techniques that work, such as the cultural differences of expatriate employees in the host country, such as differences in values, cultural beliefs, religious problems, and differences in problem-solving thinking, to adapt to the needs and cultural environment of different markets [5].

3. Cultural Differences in the Cross-cultural Work of Expated Employees

3.1. Values

There are differences in the values of expatriates and employees in the host country. This difference mainly stems from cultural background, educational experience, social environment and other aspects. Expatees usually come from different countries and regions, and they may carry the cultural values and habits of their own countries, which may differ from values and customs of the receiving nation

[6]. For example, in the project in Laos, Chinese-funded contractors are not familiar utilizing the regional market, and the host nation's cultural ideas, practices, mindsets, and lifestyles diverge greatly from those of China, resulting in frequent cross-cultural conflicts. In addition, there is also a difference in language ability between expatriated personnel and workers in the nation of destination. Expatriates need to be fluent in foreign languages for the purpose to speak with coworkers, customers and partners in different countries. This difference in language ability will also affect the way of working and teamwork, which in turn affects work efficiency and team cohesion. In general, the difference in values between expatriates and employees in the host country is a complex problem, involving culture, language, social habits and other aspects. Understanding and respecting these differences and adopting appropriate cross-cultural management strategies are crucial to promoting teamwork and improving work efficiency [7].

3.2. Religious and Cultural Beliefs

Different countries and regions have different religious beliefs and cultural traditions. In the host country, expatriate employees may encounter a different religious culture from their beliefs, which can lead to confusion and discomfort in their daily life and work. In the host country, religious customs are often closely linked to daily life. Expatriated employees need to understand and abide by local religious practises, otherwise they may be considered disrespectful to the local culture and even cause conflicts. In some countries, religious beliefs may have a certain impact on work. Expatriate employees need to understand the local work culture to avoid affecting work efficiency and teamwork due to religious beliefs. Therefore, expatriate employees should know the local religious culture, customs and beliefs in advance before going to the host country. This helps them better adapt to the new environment and reduce the troubles caused by cultural differences. Expatriate employees should respect local religious beliefs and customs, and avoid conflicts caused by improper speech and behaviour. In public, they should abide by local religious regulations, such as dressing decently and not commenting on religious topics at will. Expatriate employees should establish a good communication mechanism with local colleagues, superiors and subordinates so that they can seek help and solve problems in time. At the same time, they can better integrate into the local culture through communication to understand the values and beliefs of the local people [8]. In the event of major religious problems or disputes, expatriated employees can seek professional support within or outside the company, such as human resources departments or cross-cultural consulting organisations. These organisations can provide professional advice and help to assist expatriated employees to solve problems. Expatriated employees should cultivate their cross-cultural awareness and learn to look at problems from different angles. They are more able to adjust to the new surroundings by deepening their understanding of the receiving nation's culture by learning the local language and participating in social activities.

3.3. Differences in Thinking

In a cross-cultural working environment, expatriated employees may face the problem of differences in thinking, which usually stem from values, beliefs, communication methods and work habits in different cultural contexts. First of all, individuals with diverse cultural roots may have different communication styles. For example, some cultures tend to communicate directly and frankly, while others may be more euphemistic and indirect, which can lead to misunderstandings and poor communication. Secondly, different cultures have different views and importance to time. Some cultures emphasise punctuality and efficiency, while others may be more flexible and interpersonal-oriented [9]. Conflicts with work progress and efficiency could result from this. Third, there may be differences in the decision-making process in various social settings. Some cultures may be more inclined to collective decision-making, while others may emphasise individual decision-making and autonomy. Fourth, different cultures have different degrees of acceptance of leadership style. For example, some cultures may favour authoritative leadership, while others may value participatory or democratic leadership more [9]. Fifth, there are different views on work attitudes and values in different cultures. Some cultures may pay more attention to material interests and personal

achievements, while others may pay more attention to social status and interpersonal relationships. Sixth, different cultures may have different strategies in dealing with conflicts. Some cultures may tend to avoid conflicts, while others may be more willing to face problems and solve them positively. Finally, expatriated employees need to have a certain adaptability to cope with differences in thinking in a cross-cultural working environment. Employees with poor adaptability may feel stressed and uncomfortable, affecting work and teamwork.

4. Countermeasures for Cross-cultural Problems of Overseas Dispatched Employees in the Host Country

4.1. Culture-specific Communication Instruction

It is necessary to do a good job in cross-cultural communication training. One of the biggest challenges faced when sending employees to work overseas is how to adapt and integrate into the local cultural environment [10]. By strengthening cross-cultural communication training, they can better understand and respect local cultural customs, working methods and communication skills, so as to reduce cultural conflicts and communication barriers and integrate into local teams faster. This kind of training usually includes the following five aspects. First, it helps employees understand and adapt to the culture, social habits and working methods of the host country, and reduces the maladjustment caused by cultural differences. Second, they should strengthen communication skills training, improve employees' communication skills, and ensure that misunderstandings and conflicts can be avoided when communicating with local colleagues. Third, teamwork and collaboration encourage employees to communicate and cooperate with local colleagues, promote cooperation and collaboration between teams, and enhance team cohesion. In addition, expatriated employees also need to be supported by senior management and organisation of the enterprise [10]. Enterprises should provide a full range of organisational support, including family housing arrangements, spouse employment and children's schooling, in order to reduce the life pressure of expatriate employees and improve life satisfaction. At the same time, they should formulate a clear return policy to help expatriates get through the "return shock period" and ensure that they can give full play to their cross-cultural skills and experience. In a word, by strengthening cross-cultural communication training, expatriated employees can better adapt to the overseas working environment and reduce the challenges brought about by cultural differences, thus improving work efficiency and the ability of businesses to compete internationally.

4.2. Foreign Language Proficiency Training

It is necessary to strengthen the foreign language proficiency training for extramited personnel. They should let the expatriates familiarise themselves with the distinctive ways that the host nation's culture expresses itself, including its gestures, symbols, manners, and customs, and improve cross-language communication skills. This is conducive to regular analysis of the problems encountered by Chinese employees at all levels in communicating with local employees, improving the overall communication ability and management level of Chinese personnel, and ensuring that employees at all levels can achieve effective "two-way communication" with the foreigners they come into contact with at work [11]. First of all, expatriate personnel need to strengthen foreign language ability training to help improve cross-language communication skills. In international exchanges and cooperation, language communication is crucial. Expatriate personnel need to have good foreign language skills in order to efficiently converse with individuals from various cultural origins. In addition, being aware of the various ways that the host culture expresses itself and communicates, including its gestures, symbols, etiquette, and customs, is also an important aspect of improving cross-language communication skills [11]. Secondly, it is also conducive to enhancing the communication between employees at all levels. Dispatched personnel need to communicate effectively with local employees, which involves improving the overall communication ability and management level. By regularly analysing the problems encountered in communication with local employees by expatriate personnel

at all levels, the overall communication ability and management level of expatriate personnel can be improved, and employees at all levels can achieve effective "two-way communication" with the foreigners they come into contact with at work. In a word, strengthening foreign language ability training for expatriates is a necessary way to improve cross-cultural communication ability, enhance teamwork and adapt to the international working environment.

4.3. Actively Fulfil Social Responsibilities

Enterprises should actively fulfil their social responsibilities in accordance with the principles of "morality, transparency, commitment and joint construction", strive to build a "mutual benefit and co-prosperity" business cooperation model and mutual assistance between social interests, provide jobs for local people, give priority to local suppliers, participate in and support local construction, and improve people's livelihood and charity [12]. Enterprises should carry out cross-cultural communication training for expatriate employees, which is conducive to improving the awareness of expatriate personnel about cross-cultural risks, maintaining the mentality of "following the customs", mastering relevant knowledge, learning local languages, and alleviating cross-cultural conflicts and discomfort. Enterprises should also establish public opinion risk awareness, organise special personnel to monitor local public opinion, formulate special public opinion emergency response plans, and be highly sensitive to keywords related to "human rights, ecology, labour rights and interests, religion, abuse, fraud, bribery" and other keywords related to enterprises. Once targeted negative public opinion occurs, they should respond in a timely and active manner. In a word, actively fulfilling social responsibilities is conducive to building a business cooperation model of "mutual benefit and co-prosperity" and mutual assistance in social interests, so as to improve the local people's livelihood and charity.

5. Conclusion

In a word, the cultural differences in cross-cultural work of expatriate employees include differences in values, religious and cultural beliefs and thinking. Understanding and respecting these differences and adopting appropriate cross-cultural management strategies is crucial to promote teamwork and improving work efficiency. The cross-cultural challenges faced by expatriate employees in subsidiaries are complex, but by strengthening cross-cultural communication training, foreign language ability training, and actively fulfilling social responsibilities, it can effectively adapt Respond to the new environment. Successful cross-cultural adaptation is not only conducive to the career development of outposted employees, but also to the establishment of its corporate society and the commercial growth of subsidiaries. Therefore, Wal-Mart should be mindful of the international instruction and assistance of expatriates to aid in their improved acclimatization to the new surroundings and achieve a win-win situation. At the same time, the practical discussion before and after the return of foreign dispatchers is also a very research topic. With the deepening of globalisation, enterprises are sending more and more employees to work overseas. The return practice of these employees is directly related to the internationalisation strategy and talent management of enterprises. Secondly, it is also conducive to promoting knowledge transfer and innovation. When expatriate employees work overseas, they may be exposed to advanced management concepts, technologies or market information. After returning to China, they can transfer these knowledge and experience to China to promote the innovation and development of enterprises. In a word, it is very valuable for enterprises, individuals and even the country to conduct an in-depth discussion on the practises of foreign employees before and after their return to China. The results of this study are conducive to the cross-cultural management of expatriates in the host country, but the study explores the limited and shortcomings of the influencing factors of expatriates in cross-cultural work in the host country. In the future, the study can explore the influencing factors of different levels affecting the cross-cultural management of expatriates, such as politics, economy and other aspects.

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